

FIT TO FIGHT

Comm and info professionals everywhere are making this slogan part of their daily vernacular. But they aren't just talking about it, they're exercising their way to a better, fitter force. Here are just a few of their success stories.

Moody AFB, Ga.

As soon as word came that the Air Force was considering a new fitness regimen, the 347th Communications Squadron began developing a plan centered on the heart of the program: The 1.5-mile run, abdominal circumference, push ups, and sit-ups. But, it doesn't stop there. Not only are they running the 1.5-mile run, they are actually running 3 miles, to ensure their "comm warriors" are better able to support expeditionary roles in a tough, deployed environment.

During the past two years, the 347th CS has been

doing PT twice a week, and running 3 miles twice a month, before PT was a "cool" word again. Not only that, they added a vigorous circuit training program three times per month, proven to give every individual an exhausting, one hour total body workout. The old cliché that the comm squadron is famous for sitting in front of a computer has been shattered. The unit began unofficially testing their troops on a monthly basis beginning in September 2003, and found the overall fitness level of performers scoring in the "good and excellent range" was a dismal 45 percent.

However, by January 2004, the overall fitness level improved by 20 percent. Camaraderie has increased, confidence level is up, and people are walking around looking the part of professional "comm warriors."

The 347th CS motto is "lead by example." Leadership must and does start at the top. The senior leaders in this squadron are physically fit and supervisor encouragement is mandatory. So, at least three times per week, you'll find the 347th CS in the gym preparing themselves physically for the challenges ahead. People identified with a profile and not able to participate in



physical training are referred to the base Health and Wellness Center for assessment, who will determine what type of physical training is appropriate for them. In addition to the squadron's PT, each flight has a mandatory organized PT at least once a week. The 347th CS is ready for battle, not because being physically fit

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is the “in-thing” to do, but because it promotes a healthful lifestyle. (2nd Lt Jason G. Wood)

Ellsworth AFB, S.D.

Near the heart of the beautiful and historic Black Hills of South Dakota resides a small 179-member communications unit taking

the lead in the new Air Force fitness test. The 28th Communications Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base, initiated a regular physical training program in October 2001. Beginning a squadron PT program can be very difficult for many units. Shift work, single parent families, and high ops tempo have all been chal-

lenging factors in the squadron’s efforts to implement and sustain a unit-organized PT program.

“Our instructions clearly defined the expectations for an effective PT program that fully meets the intent of the Chief of Staff’s fit-to-fight philosophy,” said Maj. Tony Buenger, 28th CS commander. “Our people

Members of the 347th Communications Squadron, Moody AFB, Ga., participate in a 3-mile run at least twice a month. Air Force members are now scored on the amount of push ups and sit-ups that they can do in 1 minute, plus their waist measurement, and finally they're timed on a 1.5-mile run.

Tech. Sgt. Rob Jensen / 347th CS



Airman 1st Class Michael Drake is one of 179 members of the 28th Communications Squadron, Ellsworth AFB, S.D. who say they're glad to be getting fit as a team. He's an Information Systems Flight infrastructure technician. Airman 1st Class Michael Keller / 347th CS

understand that they are doing this not just to pass a PT test, but to ensure they're ready to deploy at a moment's notice, hit the ground fighting and sustain their combat effectiveness in any environment. They also understand the second objective of the PT program is to promote team building, morale and esprit de corps. This program gives the squadron an opportunity to help each other improve their physical fitness and to gel as one team."

Due to the extreme South Dakota winters, where temperatures may be from 10- to 20-degrees Fahrenheit all day, most of the sessions are conducted in the base fitness center. The 28th Bomb Wing just renovated its old B-36 bomber hangar, known as the "PRIDE" or "Professional Results in

Daily Efforts" Hangar, to house a 1/6-mile running track. When the weather is warmer outside, there is a 1/4-mile outdoor track and a 1.5-mile street course around the gym that is available for unit PT and for official testing.

All wing leadership, from the wing commander to superintendents, attend PT sessions that set the example for all Airmen. The 28th CS conducted several monthly practice PT tests during 2003 and showed a trend of officers and senior NCOs, most over the age of 30, doing better than the younger Airmen.

"It just surprises me that we [older] folks are doing better on average than our Airmen," said Senior Master Sgt. Paula Lopez, 28th CS Information Systems Flight superintendent and PT

leader. "We need to motivate our young folks to excel so they can overtake us as a group." This intense focus on athletic ability also flows into wing intramural sports.

During the past six months, softball, flag football, basketball, soccer and bowling have been popular sports for 28th CS personnel. The squadron finished second in the wing to take the title of Runner-Up Soccer Champions.

"We're doing OK in over-30 basketball, and it's a great cardio workout for us," said Staff Sgt. Chris Clark, a 28th CS Visual Information Flight photographer. "It's helped me shave about 15 seconds off my normal 1.5-mile time."

There are numerous individual success stories related to this new PT example. "These accomplishments

just show the competitive spirit and motivation of our folks" said Major Buenger. "We hope that the attitude of the 28th CS will be contagious and spread throughout the rest of the bomb wing, so each one of us can truly be called warrior athletes." (Capt. Rob Jayme)

Peterson AFB, Colo.

Nearly two years ago, the results of an Air Force survey revealed that about 54 percent of active duty members were overweight, but for the active duty at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., estimates were as high as 63 percent. The increased percentage was due in part to its relatively older active duty force, with the majority of Airmen being over 30 years old. These statistics were not lost on the leadership in the 21st

Space Communications Squadron here. While a new concept labeled WarFit was being rolled out at Air Force Space Command bases in 2002, the 21st SCS had already begun a unit level program to address both weight and fitness issues. WarFit encompasses three different areas: a comprehensive fitness assessment, squadron support/oversight, and an individual fitness program.

WarFit officially began base-wide April 1, 2003. And now, a year later, the greatest advantage for most members is a fitness program that is part of the duty day, as opposed to what had become a "free-time" fitness program.

Like most communications squadrons, a significant number of unit members support 24/7 operations, and there are few who enjoy a strictly 9-to-5 schedule. With a top-down recognition that physical fitness is integral to the mission, this renewed approach forced supervisors to build fitness into the workload.

The 21st SCS has been fortunate to have its own cadre of fitness gurus. Capt. Valerie Caruso, a certified personal trainer and yoga instructor, has helped develop the unit workout into one of the most comprehensive programs offered. Along with 1st Lt. Blake Bryson and Airman 1st Class Jeremy Sielken, unit members are constantly challenged and provided a variety of activities to participate in. With an ever-increasing ops

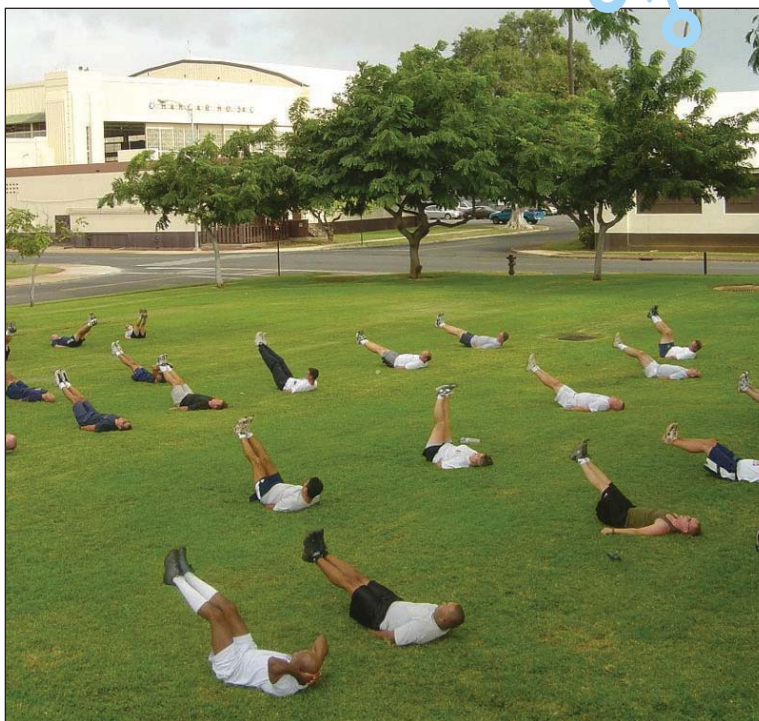


Members of the 21st Space Communications Squadron have been participating in Space Command's WarFit program since April 2003, an early start to the formal Air Force fitness program. Tech. Sgt. Christopher Valgardson / 21st SCS

tempo, and ongoing AEF support, WarFit prepares the communicators of the 21st SCS to fulfill their mission. (Tech. Sgt. Christopher Valgardson)

PACAF

The warriors of the Pacific Air Forces Computer Systems Squadron believe Airmen must be physically and mentally fit to endure the rigorous operations tempo set by recent global conflicts. With a motto of "Who's the Best? CSS! Hoo-yaal," Airmen across the unit embrace "Fit to Fight" with gusto. The unit began its fitness initiative last August by exercising twice each week as a squadron and once per week as flights. The unit has logged 174 miles in formation runs and more than 700 individual miles. Each unit formation starts with 10 stretches, 10 strength exercises (including at least 100 push ups and crunches of differing varieties), and a 3-mile run. Additionally, the



Since beginning a fitness program last August, fitness scores have increased in every category. The unit says strong leadership has played a role in the improvements. Courtesy photo / PACAF

squadron tested under the same conditions it would be in if the tests were graded, and the results proved to be impressive:

► The total unit average score climbed from 63 to an average score of 71 in three months; ► 1.5-mile run

times dropped from the "fast" Airmen making time in 18 minutes down to a respectable 14 minutes and 19 seconds! ► Push ups collectively soared from an average of 15 to 40 per person, and sit-ups rose from 20 to 50. ► Three squadron ►

members who initially had “fast” times improved so much, they entered a local marathon and completed the course. (CSS tracks these metrics using “FitLinxx,” computer system for logging PT activities.)

Unit morale and camaraderie have been at an all time high. All of this was made possible due to strong leadership up and down the chain, from the PACAF commander down to every supervisor in the flights. Officers, senior NCOs and supervisors are out in front of the troops each week, leading the charge and showing they are willing to go the distance for the team. In CSS, no one gets left behind, and everyone gives their best.

With their official test (done in March) the unit finds their people feeling confident, qualified, and motivated to raise the bar and succeed as a unit. (*Lt. Col. Karlton Johnson*)



Members of the Air Force Agency for Modeling and Simulation gather each month for PT. Some have signed up as a relay team for the Air Force Marathon in September. Courtesy photo / AFAMS

AFAMS

A well-structured physical readiness program includes not just a physical fitness regimen, but also consists of good nutritional practices and a healthful means of stress management.

The Air Force Agency for Modeling and Simulation, a Field Operating Agency, has embarked on a wellness program for its members that centers on preparing its warriors for meeting the recently published standards of fitness. The commander, Col.

David Votipka, conducts monthly physical fitness events that challenge members with push ups, sit-ups, and a 2-mile run.

These monthly events are designed to assist the 16 active duty members in determining their fitness levels and deciding on a fitness program that will help them meet and eventually exceed their goals.

Along with the active duty warriors, the 18 assigned government civilian warriors also take advantage of the monthly events. The members at AFAMS

have now established a relay team for the upcoming Air Force Marathon at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, in mid-September.

Military members also established a monthly lunch time meeting to discuss fitness goals, stress management issues, and world events that affect the Air Force.

Taking care of our Air Force mission is often directly correlated to taking care of our people. And, at AFAMS, they're doing just that. (*Capt. Rachel Castellon*)

SENIOR ATHLETE

Stay active philosophy helps keep civilian ‘fit to fight’



Active duty members are getting in better shape ... and so are many civilians. Take Mr. Dave Hansen for instance. He says his “just stay active” mentality has kept him going long after his active duty days were over. The Atchison, Kan., native was what many might call the ultimate athlete when he was in college at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Mo. He excelled in several sports such as track and field, as well as football—he received “letters” in both sports for four straight years. He also set school records in the high jump, and a still-standing highest average per reception of 19 yards as a football receiver. He even competed against future Olympic decathlon gold medalist Bruce Jenner for two years at several track meets. “He never beat me in the high jump,”

said Hansen, who works at the Air Force Communications Agency’s Information Protection Division, at Scott AFB, Ill. After his commissioning from Officer Training School in 1973, he began participating in nearly every athletic-type of competition at the various bases he was assigned during his two periods of active duty service—1972 to 1976, and 1980 to 1988—including playing rugby, baseball and soccer while stationed in Panama. As an Air Force civilian, and despite suffering a “blown knee” on active duty, Mr. Hansen has continued to participate in athletic events. Always a serious competitor, his tenacity under the basketball nets while working at U.S. Transportation Command earned him the nickname “Rhino” by Maj. Gen. (retired) George Lampe. “The younger players did not appreciate my skill and finesse under the basket,” wrote Hansen about the game. “General Lampe responded to that with ‘Mr. Hansen’s skill and finesse under the basket is like a Rhino in a

Comm officer certifies as 'International Umpire'

In addition to his job as a communications officer in the Air Combat Command Communications and Information Systems Directorate at Langley AFB, Va., Maj. Randy McLamb is also a volleyball referee and fast pitch softball umpire in his spare time.

After 20 years of softball umpiring, Major McLamb recently received the highest rating an umpire can achieve by becoming certified as an "International Umpire." He applied for and was accepted to attend the International Softball Federation certification seminar for fast pitch softball umpires. Now certified as an International Fast Pitch Umpire, he's eligible to umpire at World (adult or junior men's and women's) or Regional Softball Championships, including the Pan American



As a certified International Umpire, Maj. Randy McLamb can officiate at World, Regional, and Olympic-level games.

Games and the Olympics. Only 213 U.S. umpires have been certified in this program since it began in 1978. Of that total, only 129 are active—57 in fast pitch, 28 in slow pitch, and 44 in modified pitch. As a result, Major McLamb just became one of only 65 active fast pitch umpires in the States.

Major McLamb first began umpiring as a Little League baseball umpire in 1983, then he became a slow pitch softball umpire in 1984 after enlisting in the Air Force. He became a fast pitch umpire in 1989 and fell in love with the fast pitch softball game because it combined the best attributes of baseball and softball into one sport.

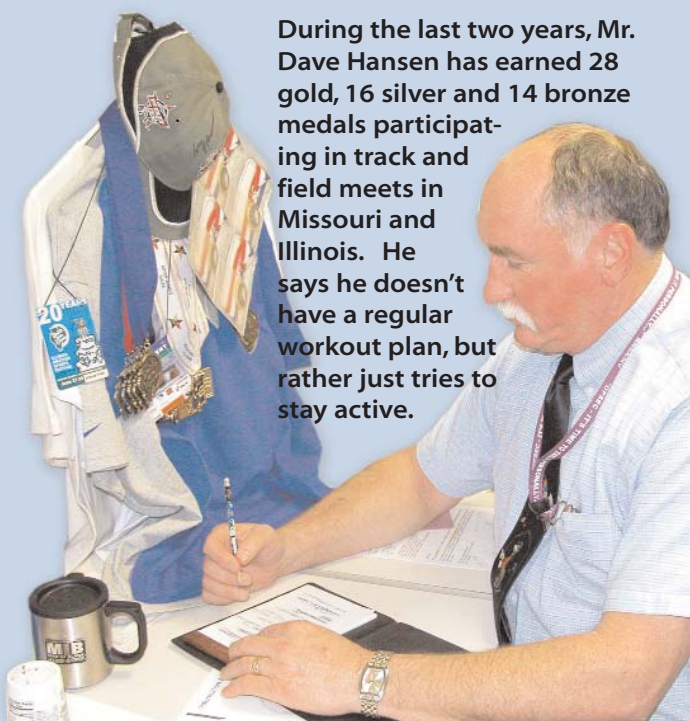
In 1993, he began umpiring NCAA softball games. Since then, he's worked in more than 12 NCAA Division I conferences in states ranging from Florida, Texas, Colorado, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. He currently works several NCAA Division I conferences along with a few NCAA Division II and III conferences.

In addition to being a fast pitch softball umpire, Major McLamb is also a volleyball referee. He's currently a National referee with the Professional Association of Volleyball Officials and is completing his National referee certification this year with USA Volleyball.

"The people you meet, the friends you make, and being a mentor to others are the greatest rewards of being an umpire or referee," he said. (HQ ACC/SCXA)

china shop." As a testament to his philosophy of staying active, at age 43, he began participating in a variety of track and field and other events during the annual Prairie State Games competition held in the St. Louis area. Ten years later, there is no slowing him down. During the last two years, he earned 28 gold, 16 silver and 14 bronze medals participating in track and field meets in Missouri and Illinois. He is also an avid hunter and fisherman hosting outings with family and friends. Though Hansen's philosophy keeps him busier than most people, it's also unusual in that it doesn't emphasize regular workouts to stay in shape.

"Even watching sports can keep the blood flowing," he says with a smile. "I'll probably compete until I'm unable to get to the meets. The way things are going, my knees are going to make me stop high jumping, so I'll have to just do the throwing events until my arm falls off," he explained. "Then, I'll have to learn to do them with the other arm... It's something I enjoy and can do with some skill. I'm not sure why. It's like asking a fisherman that practices catch and release, 'why do you keep fishing?'" (Gerald Sonnenberg, AFCA/PA)



During the last two years, Mr. Dave Hansen has earned 28 gold, 16 silver and 14 bronze medals participating in track and field meets in Missouri and Illinois. He says he doesn't have a regular workout plan, but rather just tries to stay active.